

Chef's Dicing Tips & Techniques

vegetable, grow in anything but perfect cube shape. This presents some definite challenge when you need to cut a vegetable into uniform dice for purposes of even cooking and/or aesthetic appeal. To learn the best and most efficient way to dice, we turned to Chef Alain Sailhac, the executive dean of culinary studies at the French



Culinary Institute in New York City, where technical precision is part and parcel of classic French culinary training. We decided to start with the basics: potatoes and carrots, to underscore the primary approach to turning odd-shaped vegetables into even-shaped dice.

For each vegetable, we included two techniques: quick "rough" dicing as well as precise dicing, which is used when appearance is paramount.

The knife position for dicing most vegetables is with the tip of the blade pointed down, the butt end raised. To avoid slipping, Sailhac particularly advised that vegetables be dried before cutting, especially woody or awkward-shaped vegetables. The cutting board should also be dry, with no oil on it.

Chef Alain Sailhac, along with chef instructor Jacques Pépin, André Solner, and Jacques Torres, recently published *The French Culinary Institute's Salute to Healthy Cooking* (Kodansha Press, 1998).

TERMS AND SIZES

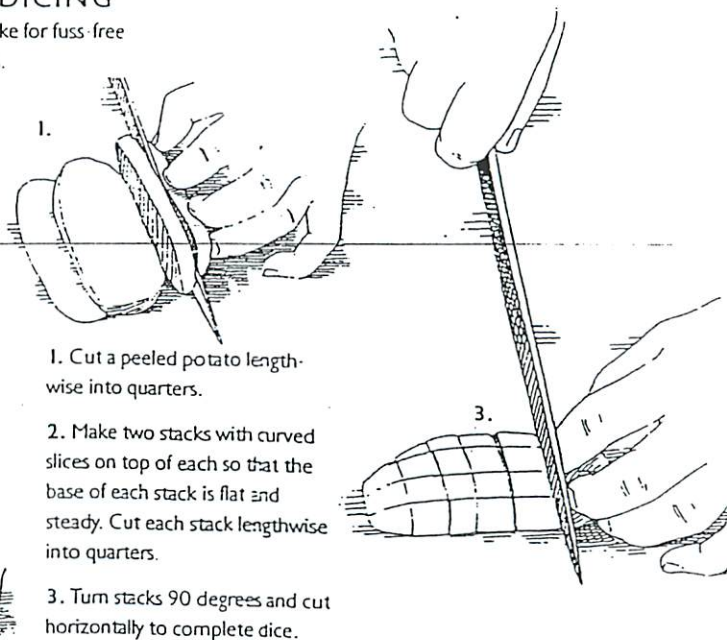
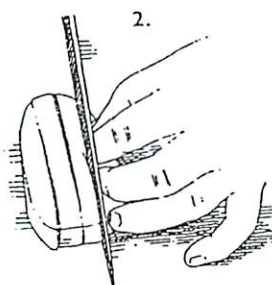


QUICK ROUGH DICING

The following techniques make for fuss-free prep suitable for most dishes.

Potatoes

Because they are rounded, potatoes can be awkward to dice. They can also be slippery on the cutting board when peeled and sticky to cut through because of their high starch content.



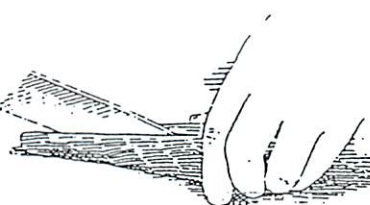
1. Cut a peeled potato lengthwise into quarters.

2. Make two stacks with curved slices on top of each so that the base of each stack is flat and steady. Cut each stack lengthwise into quarters.

3. Turn stacks 90 degrees and cut horizontally to complete dice.

Carrots

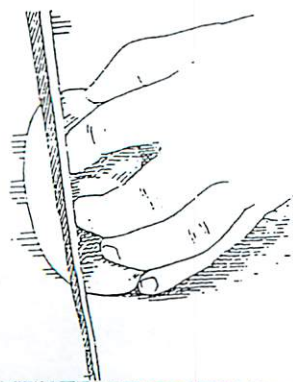
Root vegetables such as carrots and parsnips can be tricky to dice because of their tapered shape. Their fibrous, woody composition can also make them tough and slippery to cut through.



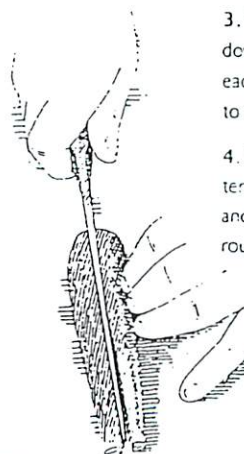
1. Holding the top to steady the peeled carrot, cut through the center two-thirds of the carrot's length.

2. Turn the carrot around and, holding onto the halved tapered end, cut down the center length of the top, starting where the first cut began.

TIP: MODIFIED CLAW HOLD

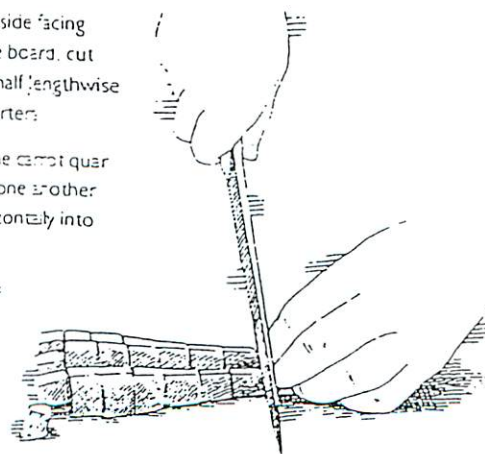


Because of the potato's rounded shape, the traditional "claw" grip of the hand guiding the knife must be adjusted. With the back of the index and middle finger still guiding the knife blade, extend the pinkie finger and thumb to polar ends of the potato to hold it steady.



3. With cut side facing down on the board, cut each half in half lengthwise to make quarters.

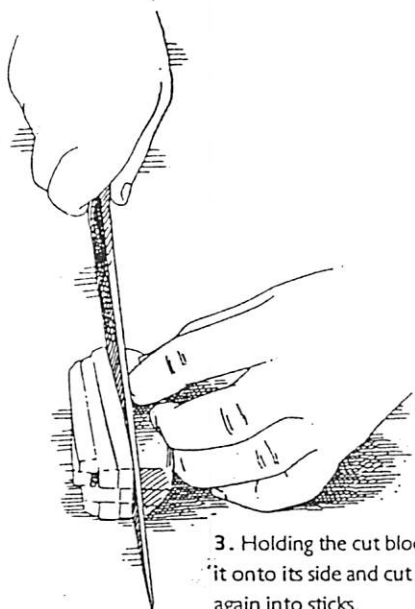
4. Line up the carrot quarters next to one another and cut horizontally into rough dice.



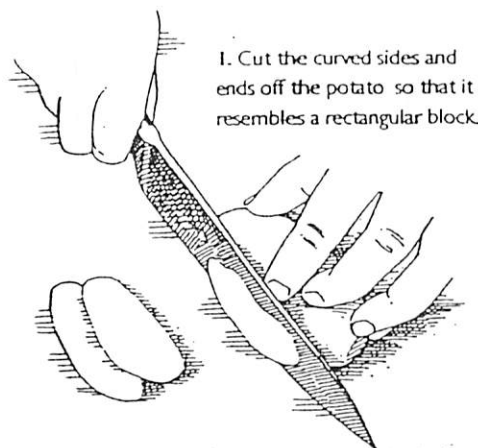
PRECISE DICING

On special occasions when presentation is emphasized, the following straightforward steps will give you perfect dice.

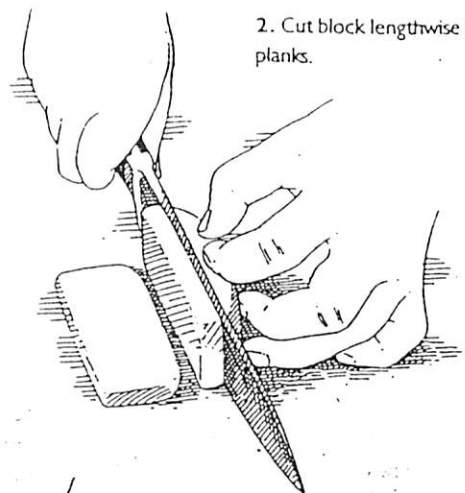
Potatoes



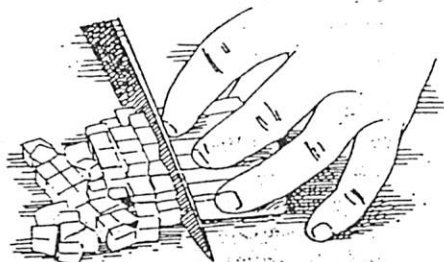
3. Holding the cut block intact, turn it onto its side and cut lengthwise again into sticks.



1. Cut the curved sides and ends off the potato so that it resembles a rectangular block.



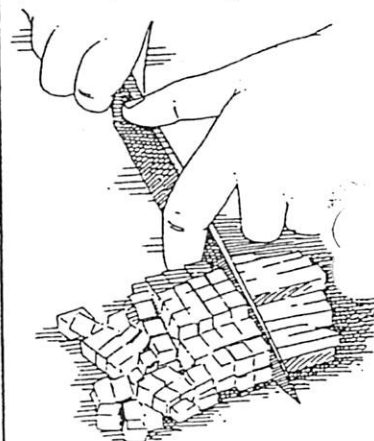
2. Cut block lengthwise into planks.



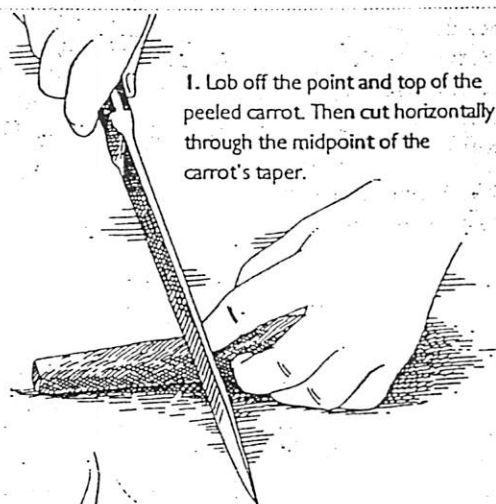
4. Turn the block to cut through the sticks horizontally to get perfect square dice.

TIP: KEEPING STACKS NEAT

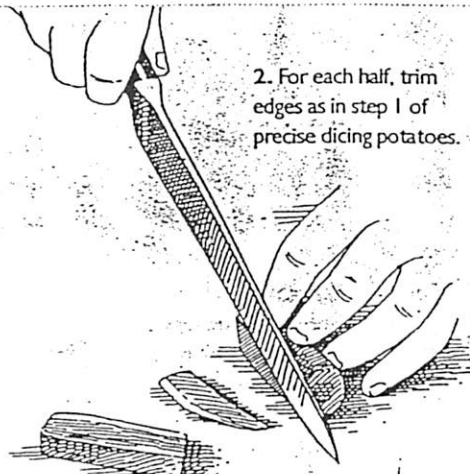
To keep neat stacks in place, when the knife is being pulled away, arch your hand over the knife and hold the base of the stack in place with your index finger.



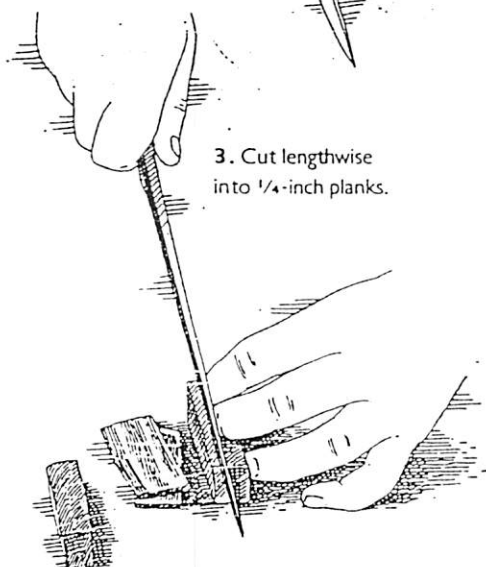
Carrots



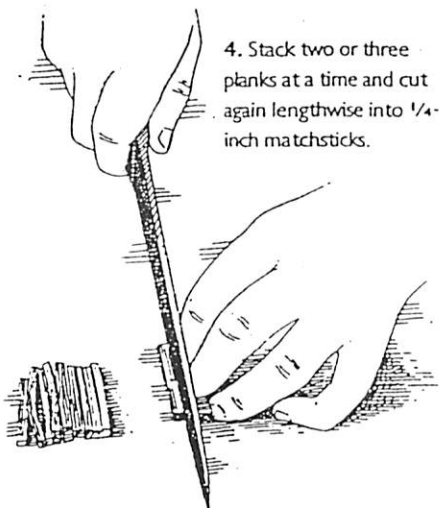
1. Lob off the point and top of the peeled carrot. Then cut horizontally through the midpoint of the carrot's taper.



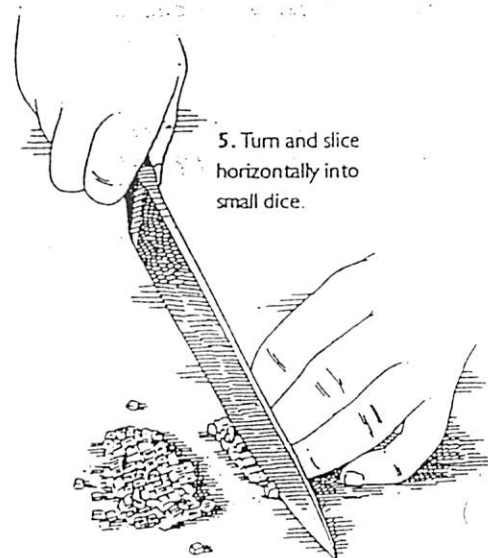
2. For each half, trim edges as in step 1 of precise dicing potatoes.



3. Cut lengthwise into 1/4-inch planks.



4. Stack two or three planks at a time and cut again lengthwise into 1/4-inch matchsticks.



5. Turn and slice horizontally into small dice.

2 Inches



Brunoise



1/8"

Julienne



1/8"

Small Dice



1/4"

Batonnet



1/4"

Medium Dice



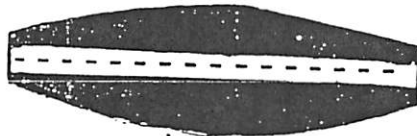
1/2"

Large Dice



3/4"

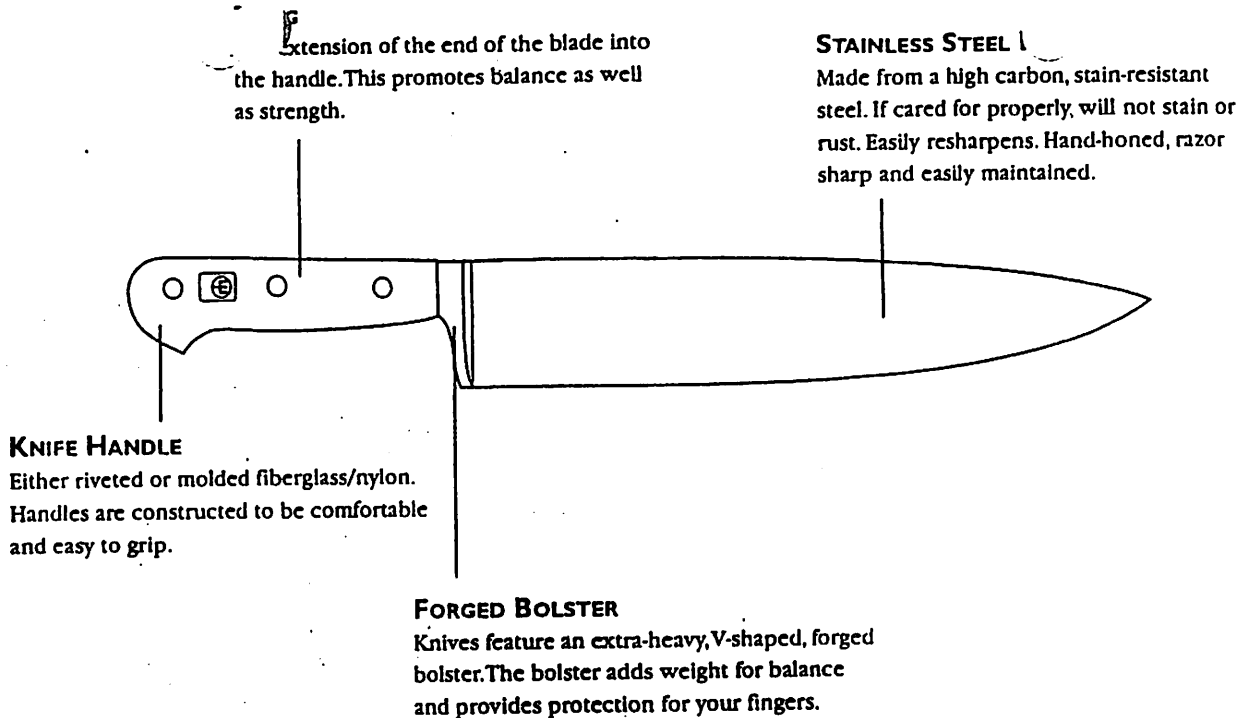
Tourner



1 3/4" x 5/8"

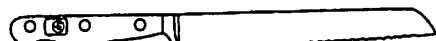
Basic Knife Cuts

- Quality knives are individually hand-forged from a single piece of high-carbon, no-stain steel. The blades are precision ground and hand-honed to razor sharpness for precise and effortless cutting.
- The knife has a "full tang" which means the steel extends the full length of the handle for safety and endurance.
- The handles are made of a high-impact, non-porous composition material, triple-riveted or molded to the tang for a lifetime of use.



PARING KNIFE

To peel and slice small fruits and vegetables.



SERRATED UTILITY KNIFE

To slice tomatoes, citrus, salami and baguettes.



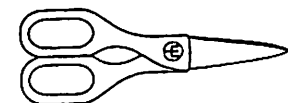
BONING KNIFE

To separate cooked or uncooked poultry and meat from the bone.



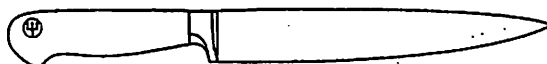
UTILITY KNIFE

The most often used knife in the kitchen. To slice cold cuts; carve smaller meats. To peel, slice, and chop larger fruits and vegetables.



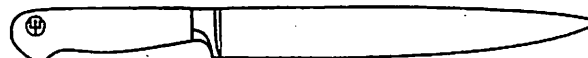
KITCHEN SHEARS

Multi-purpose utility shears. Molded handles for comfortable grip.



CARVING KNIFE

To carve medium sized roasts or poultry. Used to slice large fruits and vegetables.



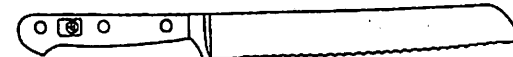
LONG SLICER

To carve turkey and large roasts.



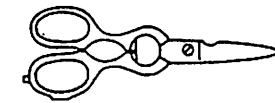
CHEF'S KNIFE

The most important knife in the kitchen. To chop, mince, cut and slice. Its wide blade lets you chop and dice without your knuckles hitting the cutting surface. Weight aids in chopping.



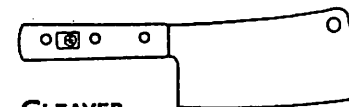
BREAD KNIFE

To cut through the crust of bread or any other foods with a tough skin and soft interior.



KITCHEN SHEARS

Fully forged, heavy-weight, stainless steel construction. Comes apart for easy cleaning and sharpening.



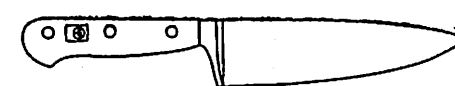
CLEAVER

To chop through joints and bones. Weight aids in chopping.



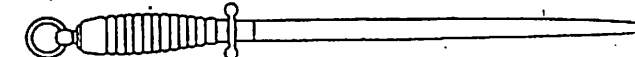
FORK

To hold meat or poultry in position while carving.



ASIAN CHEF'S KNIFE

To cut meat or fish into small pieces. The specially contoured edge is perfect for chopping and slicing vegetables.



SHARPENING STEEL

To maintain cutting surface of blade.

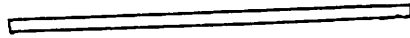


POULTRY SHEARS

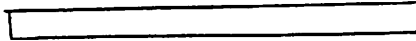
Fully forged, heavy-weight, stainless steel construction. To separate cooked or uncooked poultry into pieces, at the joint or through the bone.

KNIFE CUTS

FINE JULIENNE: $1/16"$ x $1/16"$ x $2"$



JULIENNE: $1/8"$ x $1/8"$ x $2"$



BATONNET: $1/4"$ x $1/4"$ x $2"$



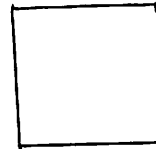
SMALL DICE: $1/4"$ x $1/4"$ x $1/4"$



MEDIUM DICE: $1/2"$ x $1/2"$ x $1/2"$



LARGE DICE: $3/4"$ x $3/4"$ x $3/4"$



FINE BRUNOISE: $1/16"$ x $1/16"$ x $1/16"$



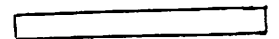
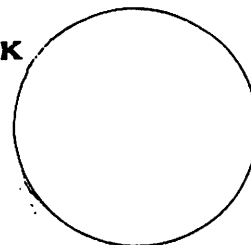
BRUNOISE: $1/8"$ x $1/8"$ x $1/8"$



TOURNEE: $3/4"$ DIAMETER, $2"$ LONG AND 7 SIDED



RONDELLE: $1-1\frac{1}{2}"$ DIAMETER, $1/8"$ THICK



PAYSANNE: $1/2"$ x $1/2"$ $1/8"$ TRIANGLES OR SQUARES

